

I. Trail Issues and Needs

For a city of its size, El Paso has few in-town trail corridors. The two better trails in the city are on the west side of the city along the Rio Grande corridor and the Pat O'Rourke Memorial Trail along Resler Drive.

Goals of a Trail System for El Paso

- Plan a system that can be developed in increments by many different entities, but that ultimately will interconnect into a citywide network.
- Increase the level of understanding of the importance and value of trails and greenways, and to encourage the stewardship of natural and cultural resources.
- Provide a framework for coordinated development of trails throughout the city.
- Enhance the quality of life for citizens of El Paso by providing additional recreational facilities.
- Provide access to trail corridors for all parts of the city and all residents of El Paso.
- Create and enhance a strong sense of identity for El Paso as the trail system is developed.
- Provide access to as many community facilities, such as schools, civic facilities, retail and employment establishments as is possible.

Key Desirable Characteristics of Trails

The Pat O'Rourke Trail corridor exemplifies the benefits that trails provide in a city. The trail not only provides an extremely popular place for walking and exercising, but also has become

a key social gathering place. The trail beautifies an otherwise ordinary corridor with nothing more than landscaping and an asphalt ribbon.

Trails in the context of this chapter refer more to connections between parks, and not to the simple trails within parks. While those trails are beneficial in every large park in the city, they should be treated as a matter of course, just like playgrounds and basketball courts are provided in most parks. Rather, trails need to be developed as the basis for a spine system throughout the city. That spine system of trails will someday allow a user, for instance, to travel between Memorial Park and Grandview Park along a pleasant corridor.

Trail Users

Trails should be designed to accommodate a variety of users. Activity on a trail lends a sense of safety and comfort to a trail, and encourages others who are not as active to use the trail. Users of trails will include:

Walking for exercise and recreation – typical use is relaxed walking along a pleasant corridor. May include senior citizens, mothers with children or families. May occupy a significant portion of the trail due to walking side by side.

Joggers and Runners – use trail corridors for exercise and activity. Higher speed may conflict with slower users of the trails.

Recreational Cyclists – use trails for exercise and activity, and are interested in scenic appeal and connectivity of the trail system. They may prefer more interesting trail alignments, rather than trails that favor higher speeds.



Higher speed riders – are usually more experienced riders and typically are more interested in higher speeds. These riders often favor roadways over off-street trails. For off-street trails, alignments with shallower curves are favored by these users. Because of the higher speeds, increased trail widths are recommended to reduce conflicts with other trail users.



Mountain Biking – users can use crushed rock or more natural trail surfaces, and preferred trails with challenging terrain.

Roller Blading – skaters tend to take up more space because of the swinging hand motion of in-line skating. Wider trail widths are necessary to avoid conflicts with other trail users.

Commuting or riding to a destination – have similar characteristics to high speed riders, and are most interested in access to the trail system and the ultimate connectivity that it provides.

Trail Types

A variety of different trail types should be considered in El Paso. These include:

Multi-purpose recreation trails – typically hard surface of asphalt or concrete, and designed to accommodate a

variety of users. A Minimum of 8’ width is recommended, and a 10’ width is preferred.

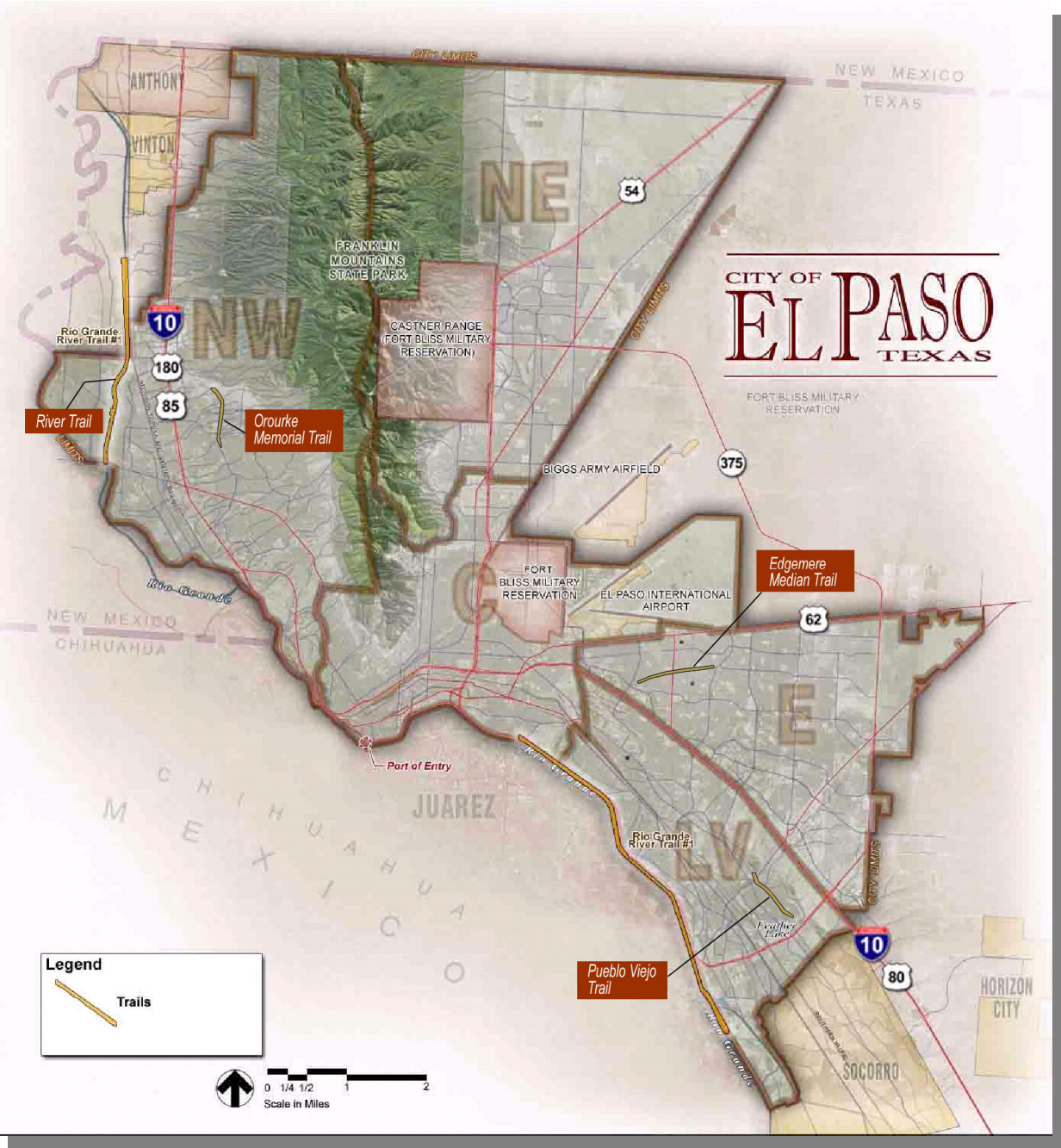
Natural surface nature trails – soft surface trails provide a more natural feeling in wooded areas or locations with scenic appeal. Width can be reduced since high speed use is not involved.

Off-street trails in roadway parkways – where off-street corridors are not readily available, trails can be placed along roadways, and in effect become wider sidewalks. Key issues are maintaining an adequate amount of separation from nearby lanes of traffic, and fitting the wider trail/sidewalk corridor within the available right of way.

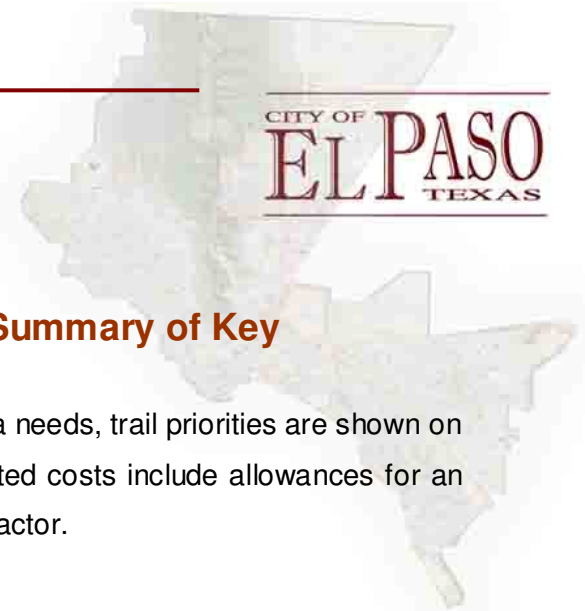


Distribution of Trails in El Paso

The map on this page illustrates the location of major trails in the city.



Major Trails in El Paso



A target level of 1 mile of in-town trail for every 10,000 residents is recommended by this plan.

Existing Level of Service – Trails

The existing level of service for trails is shown in the table on the following page. Citywide, the current level of service is just over 1 mile of trail for every 37,000 residents. In both the Central and the Northeast areas, no major linkage trails currently exist. The citywide total is only 27% of the desired miles of trails in El Paso.

Proposed Target Level of Service – Trails

A goal of one mile of trail for every 10,000 residents of El Paso is established by this master plan. Trails should be distributed throughout the city. For a population of 634,000, El Paso should have approximately 63 miles of trails. The city currently has a little over 17 miles built or funded for construction, leaving a deficit of over 46 miles of trails.

Trail Priorities and Summary of Key Recommendations

Based on the areas by area needs, trail priorities are shown on the following page. Projected costs include allowances for an administrative and design factor.

Trail Opportunities

Coordinate with the IBWC (International Boundary Water Commission) and the El Paso County Water Improvement District #1 for use of Northeast and North/South levees adjacent to the Rio Grande and irrigation corridors to develop a series of interconnecting trails.

Use utility easements to create corridors for trails and linear parks.

Use drainage channels as locations for trails. These corridors should have gates to restrict use during significant flood events.

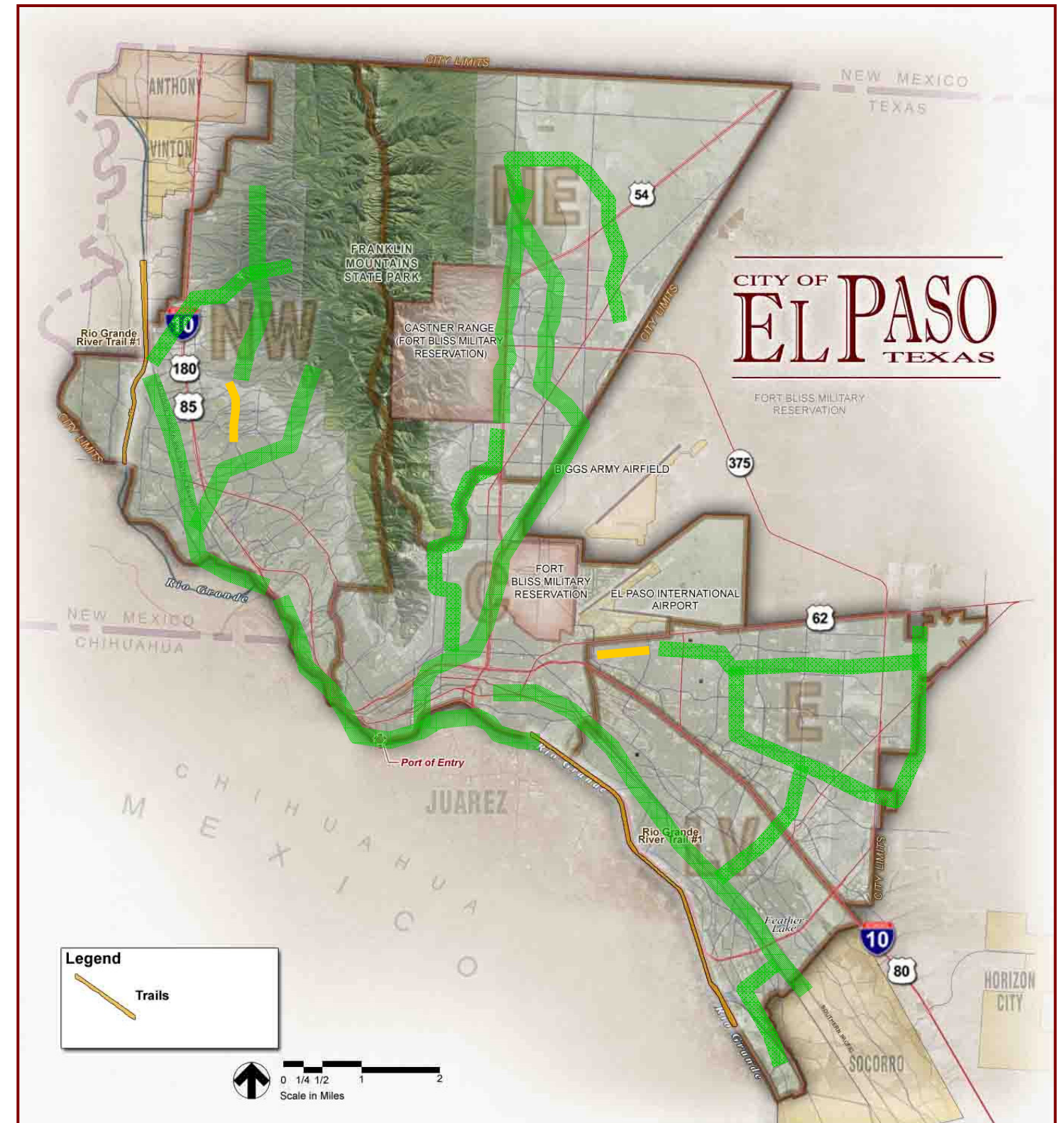
Preserve very wide greenbelts in open desert areas. These can serve as both the drainage and the linear park corridors for new areas, and can link entire neighborhoods together.



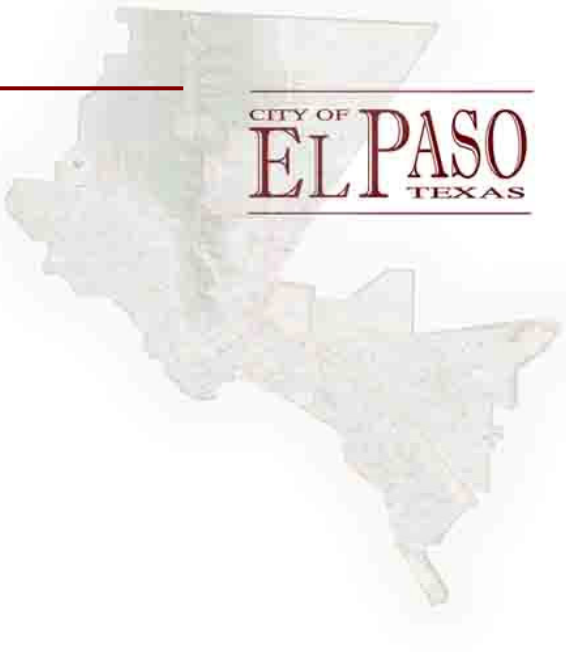
Potential Trail Development Actions

Action	Size	Potential Cost
1. Far East Power Line Trail Montana to Montwood	2.5 miles +/-	\$ 1,500,000*
2. Franklin/Lincoln Canal Trail Washington Pk. To Ascarate	3.0 miles +/-	\$ 2,500,000*
3. Franklin Canal to Pueblo Viejo Montana to Montwood	4.5 miles +/-	\$ 4,500,000*
4. Paisano Trail UTEP to Armijo Ctr.	2.25 miles	\$ 2,500,000*
5. River Trail Paisano or Franklin to Chamizal	2.0 miles +/-	\$ 2,000,000*
6. UP Corridor – Paisano to Memorial Park (requires UP permission)	2.5 miles +/-	\$ 4,000,000*
7. Memorial Pk to Grandview Blvd. trail	1.5 miles +/-	\$ 1,500,000*
8. Grandview to Nations Tobin along Railroad or Dyer	4.0 miles +/-	\$ 4,500,000*
9. Nations Tobin to Skyline Park	2.0 miles +/-	\$ 1,500,000
10. Skyline to Veterans Park	2.5 miles +/-	\$ 2,000,000
11. Redd Rd. to Three Hills Park	1.0 miles +/-	\$ 1,000,000
12. Resler South Trail	2.0 miles +/-	\$ 1,500,000
Subtotal	28 to 30 miles	\$29,500,000

*Land acquisition or permission to use not included



Major trail linkage framework
concept for El Paso



Utility and Street corridors can be used for linear parks and trails



Drainage and irrigation canals can be used for linear parks



Arroyos and the Rio Grande River also create unique linkage opportunities.



II. Open Space Issues and Needs

A detailed review of open space needs and opportunities in El Paso will be added as an addendum to this plan, but the Master Plan provides an overview of where the city is today.

No matter where one goes in El Paso, one is surrounded by the stark ruggedness of the Franklin Mountains. With one of the largest close in open space reserves anywhere in the United States, it is fair to ask why El Paso needs more open space.

One only has to drive through much of the city to understand why additional open space is so badly needed. Most cities have the benefit of rivers, creeks or other frequent natural features that provide a temporary relief from the city around them. These slivers of undeveloped lands without buildings break up the pattern of buildings, and are very much valued as a city matures and grows. Think of New York City without Central Park, or Miami without its beaches and bays, or Denver without the Platte River.

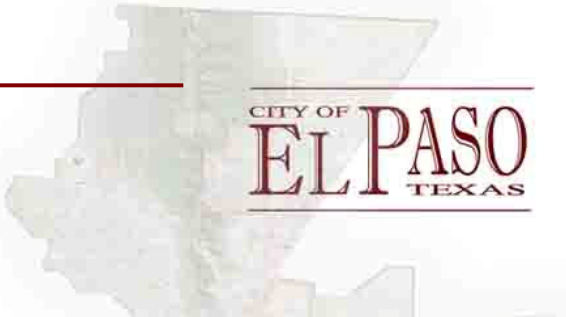
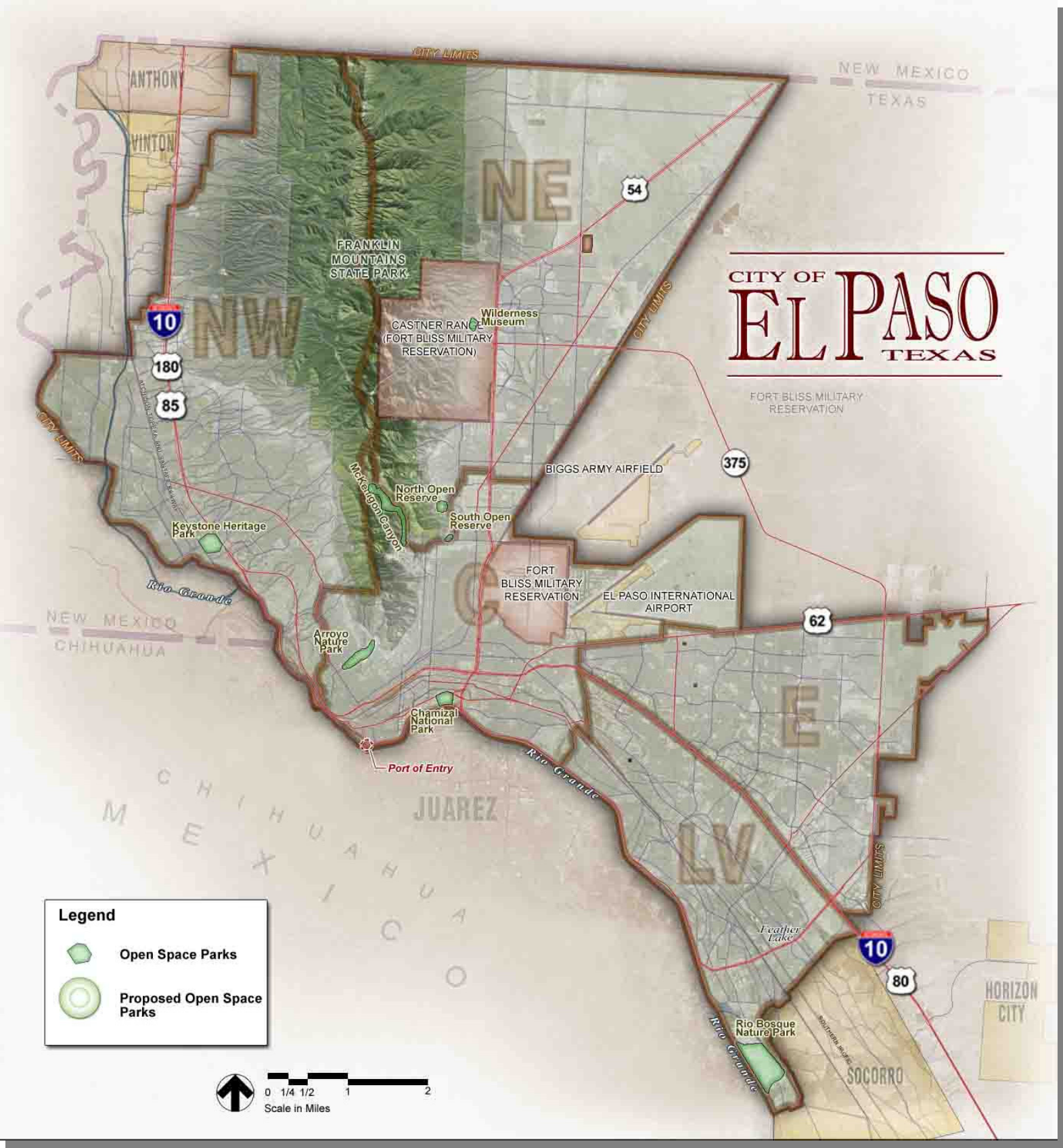
The desert that surrounds El Paso is fragile and yet relatively easy to develop. Once drainage is accommodated, the lands

in much of El Paso can be developed almost without limitation. Arroyos can be filled, hills can be leveled, and drainage channels can be lined with concrete and made very narrow.

El Paso needs more in-town open space. It needs areas close to each neighborhood that reminds El Pasoans of the beauty of the desert. These places will become peaceful sanctuaries and places to rest.

Major open space preserves in El Paso are shown on the following pages. These include the Keystone Heritage Wetlands, McKelligon Canyon, Arroyo Park and the newly acquired but privately owned Resler Canyon, and the Rio Bosque Preserve. All together, the total open space acreage in El Paso is around 941 acres, and is equivalent to around 1.5 acres for every 1,000 residents.

In City Publicly Owned Natural Areas/Open Space	Existing Acres	Acres per 1000 residents		Acres per 1000 residents			Acres per 1000 residents		
		Year 2000	Year 2006	Year 2006	Year 2016		Year 2016	Year 2016	
Central	0.00	123,858	-	120,049	-	0%	125,132	-	0%
East	105.00	153,194	0.68	197,463	0.53	5%	240,584	0.44	4%
Mission Valley	449.35	103,001	4.28	101,450	4.45	45%	109,117	4.11	41%
Northeast	297.06	92,761	2.60	91,349	3.25	32%	115,128	2.58	26%
Northwest	90.00	90,848	0.78	105,555	0.86	9%	148,332	0.61	6%
Citywide	941.4	563,300	1.671	634,866	1.53		734,070	1.28	



Arroyo Park preserves an in-town arroyo, and has lead to increased property values near the preserve.



Keystone Heritage Park combines excellent craftsmanship with large natural areas in the heart of El Paso.



Rio Bosque is a large natural preserve that produces spectacular growth in tune with the cycles of the Rio Grande River

Proposed Target Level of Service – Open Space

A benchmark level of ten to 15 acres of open space preserves for every 1,000 residents of El Paso is established by this master plan. These acres should be in-town open space, excluding large tracts of land like the Castner Range and the Franklin Mountains. This may seem like a high ratio, but for a population of 634,000 residents is only 6,340 to 9,500 acres, or 4% to 5.5% of the total land area of the city of El Paso. Most importantly, open space must be preserved before it is forever lost.

The open space goal can be achieved by:

- Preserving existing arroyos within the city limits or in areas that will someday be in the city;
- Acquiring and preserving additional key open space tracts of land in and near the city;
- Converting some of the existing detention facilities in the city into open space amenities, through the use of increased
- Coordinate the acquisition of land with the PSB
- Work with Neighborhood Associations to identify existing open space

The preservation of natural areas and arroyo corridors should become a high priority.



Detention areas can be converted into open space opportunities if preserved in a natural condition.

